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CBI ARRESTS ABG SHIPYARD FOUNDER IN ₹22,842 CRORE BANK FRAUD CASE

Rishi K Agarwal was arrested on Wednesday after the probe officer suspected he was not cooperating during questioning

CASE REGISTERED AFTER COMPLAINT FROM SBI

Apart from Agarwal, the CBI had also booked ABG's former executive director Santhanam Muthaswamy, and directors Ashwini Kumar, Sushil Kumar Agarwal and Ravi Vimal Nevetia on February 7. The case was registered on a complaint from the State Bank of India, which was part of a consortium of 28 banks led by ICICI Bank that lent to ABG Shipyard

FORENSIC AUDIT FOUND DIVERSION OF FUNDS

- The complaint was filed after a forensic audit of ABG's loan accounts, which had turned bad, showed the company created a web of transactions between 2012 and 2017 to cheat the lenders
- According to the CBI, the fraud was primarily on account of huge transfer of funds by the company to some of the accused

₹7,089 cr

ICICI BANK'S EXPOSURE TO ABG, FOLLOWED BY IDBI BANK (₹3,639 CR) & SBI (₹2,925 CR)

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Govt mute spectator to hate speech: SC

Comes down hard on television channels for promoting hatred, raps biased TV anchors

SHRUTI KAKKAR @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday rapped the Centre's inaction on the hate speech issue, while directing it to file its reply within two weeks clearly indicating whether it intends to enact a law to curb the menace, as recommended by the Law Commission.

Highlighting the same issue, the Election Commission had last week told the apex court that it does not have the legal power to de-recognise political parties or disqualify candidates over hate mongering because existing laws don't define hate speech or hate mongering.

"Why is the government of India standing as mute witness when all of this (hate speech on TV news channels) is happening? Why is the Centre treating this like a trivial issue? Political parties will come and go, but the nation will endure," said a bench of judges K M Joseph and Hrishikesh Roy while hearing a batch of petitions seeking to curb hate mongering.

Slamming the news channels that promote hate speech, the bench noted that television anchors allow certain panellists to make vitriolic comments but stop the other side to express their counter views by muting their microphones.

The bench said strict action should be taken against erring news anchors and that such people should also be taken off air.

"Mainstream TV channels still hold sway. The role of anchor is critical and it's their duty to see that hate speech doesn't occur... Many a time those who want to speak are muted," the bench observed.

Stressing the fact that there is no definition of hate speech, advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, appearing for one of the petitiones, submitted that the people accused of hate speech are now charged under Section 153A of IPC (Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence) but they ultimately get off the hook. He added that political parties were being benefited by hate speech.

The bench posted matter for hearing on November 23.

Law Commission's recommendations

In its Report No 267 titled Hate Speech, the Law Commission suggested the following amendments to the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973:

- Insert a new IPC Section 153C (Prohibiting incitement to hatred) following Section 153B
- Insert Section 505A (Causing fear, alarm, or provocation of violence in certain cases) following Section 505 IPC

Other observations

- Hate speech poses complex challenges to freedom of speech and expression
- In the US, hate speech is given wide constitutional protection, whereas under international human rights covenants and in other western democracies, such as Canada, Germany, and the UK, it is regulated and subject to sanctions

PARTIAL MOBILISATION

3L RESERVISTS GET PUTIN CALL FOR WAR

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday announced a partial mobilisation of 3 lakh reservists to start pre-emptive military operations in Donbas, weeks after Ukrainian troops managed to recapture vast swathes of its territory from Russian invaders. This is the first such call-up in Russia since World War II.

Timed as it was a day after four regions in Ukraine — Luhansk, Kherson, partly Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk — decided to hold referendums on amalgamating themselves with Russia, Putin's attempt to swallow them by weaponising the democratic exercise was clear. The votes are to be held between September 23 and 27.

"Primarily those who served in the armed forces will be called up," the Russian President said. Ahead of his seven-minute televised address, Putin signed an executive order for the immediate mobilisation. Putin also warned he wasn't bluffing over using everything at his disposal to protect Russia, which was an apparent reference to his nuclear arsenal. He also accused the West of making attempts to weaken, divide and destroy Russia. "The West has used indiscriminate Russophobia as a weapon... primarily in Ukraine, which wasdesigned to become an anti-Russia bridgehead," he said.

Panic, rush to fly out

The partial mobilisation triggered panic in Russia with a large numbers of people rushing to book one-way tickets out of the country. Flights filled up quickly and the prices of tickets zoomed

A spokesman for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said conscripts sent to Ukraine would face a similar fate as ill-prepared Russian forces who were repelled in an attack on Kyiv in the first days of the war. US national security council spokesperson John Kirby said Putin's speech is "definitely a sign that he's struggling." PTI

Kochi turns Cong hub; Gehlot confirms fight

CYNTHIA CHANDRAN & SHAHID FARIDI @ TPuram/New Delhi

WITH the process to file nomination papers for the Congress presidential election set to begin in a few days, Kochi is becoming the epicentre of action as everyone who matters in the party is or will be here.

Apart from Rahul Gandhi, who is leading the Bharat Jodo yatra, Rajasthan chief minister and official candidate of the Gandhi family Ashok Gehlot's bete noir Sachin Pilot, Mallikarjun Kharge, Digvijaya Singh and Jairam Ramesh are here. Gehlot and AICC general secretary K C Venugopal are expected to arrive tomorrow.

Sachin Pilot, who reached on Tuesday night, is learnt to have held closed door discussions with Rahul twice during the day. He also took part in the Bharat Jodo Yatra. "Sachinji has urged Rahulji to take up the post of party president. He is still hopeful," a KPCC leader close to the former told this newspaper. Sources said Pilot expressed strong displeasure at the wily Gehlot intending to stay on as CM while entering the presidential race.

While talking to this daily, Sachin said, "It is Rahulji's decision whether he should contest or not." Earlier in the day, Gehlot indicated his candidature saying, "I am lucky that Congress people across the country love and trust me...So I won't be able to say no. *Jahan mujhe kahenge... form bharna hai, main form bharoonga* (If they ask me to fill a form to contest, I will fill it and contest)," he said.

Gehlot said this after discussions with party president Sonia Gandhi in Delhi. He, however, added that he would still try to change Rahul's mind. "There will be more impact if he undertakes the yatra as Congress president. I will talk to him, and then decide (on filing nomination papers)," he said.

Interestingly, Gehlot will visit the Sai Baba mandir in Shirdi on his way back from Kochi on Friday — quite an indicator of the way things are panning out in the party.

'No bar on staying as CM'

The one-man-one-post rule adopted at the party's Udaipur meet applies to nominated posts only, Gehlot said, adding, "This is an open election."

Tharoor at AICC HQ

Shashi Tharoor, the other contender, visited the AICC HQ to check out the voters' list

Police personnel remove posters accusing Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's government of graft, pasted by unknown people on a compound wall, in Bengaluru on Wednesday | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

POLICE LAUNCH MANHUNT

Bengaluru: City top cop C H Pratap Reddy said the police are on the hunt for those who pasted the 'PayCM' posters. "The Central Division Police registered cases under the Public Places Disfigurement Act," he said. The cases have been transferred to the City Crime Branch (CCB). P3

CONGRESS, BJP IN 'POSTER WAR' OVER CORRUPTION

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru

AFTER 'welcome to 40 per cent CM' billboard put up in Hyderabad recently, Congress in Karnataka on Wednesday launched a 'paycm' poster campaign against the BJP government, triggering a 'poster war' over corruption in the state.

Posters carrying Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's photograph, QR code and 'paycm 40 per cent accepted here, scan this code to make the CM pay for corruption' were found pasted on walls at many places in Bengaluru, including the walls of CM's official residence on Race Course Road in Bengaluru. The QR code on the poster redirects to Congress's web portal launched recently to receive complaints of corruption against the Bommai government.

While authorities got the posters removed from the walls of the CM's residence, posters were seen on the walls and dustbins all along Queen's Road and Jayamahal area in Bengaluru.

Reacting to the poster campaign, Bommai termed it a conspiracy to tarnish his and Karnataka's reputation. "Even we know how to do such baseless campaigns on social media. But people know it is a big lie", Bommai said. The CM had strongly reacted to the billboard in Telangana that was allegedly put up by Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) members by saying that such acts would only spoil the ties between the two neighbouring states.

In New Delhi, BJP National General Secretary C T Ravi alleged that the campaign is part of Congress party's tool kit. "The attempt to tarnish the government's image in this way started sometime ago and if they have evidence on 40 per cent commission, let them lodge a complaint with the Lokayukta", he said. P4

Fed hikes rate BY 0.75% AS INFLATION DEEPENS

Intensifying its fight to rein in inflation, the US Federal Reserve on Wednesday raised its target interest rate by three-quarters of a percentage point for a third straight time. The move boosted the benchmark short-term rate, which affects consumer and business loans, to a range of 3-3.25%, the highest level since 2008. Meanwhile, the Fed's quarterly projections, showed the economy slowing to a crawl in 2022, with year-end growth at 0.2%

PM CARES FUND

Sudha: I feel privileged to be picked as Trust member

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

"I feel grateful if I can make even a small change in the life of a poor person", said noted educator and philanthropist **Sudha Murty** on being nominated as a member of the Board of PM CARES Fund Trust. Murty, former chairperson of Infosys Foundation, told *TNIE*, "I am very happy to learn about my nomination to the Board of Trustees of the PM CARES Fund. I feel very privileged and proud to find myself working with some of the most eminent personalities like Sri Ratan Tata. My focus has always been to work for the poor and the underprivileged. I will continue to do so as a member of the Board."

She, however, added that she is yet to receive the official order to know and understand her role in the Board.

The other trustees of the PM CARES Fund are former Supreme Court judge Justice K T Thomas, former Deputy Speaker Kariya Munda, Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, Ratan Tata, former comptroller and auditor general of India Rajiv Mehrishi and co-founder of Teach for India and former CEO of Indicorps and Piramal Foundation Anand Shah.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while chairing a meeting of the Board on Tuesday, said the participation of the new trustees and advisers will provide wider perspectives to the functioning of the PM CARES Fund, according to a statement issued by the PMO.

The meeting was attended by Fund trustees including Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Project Cheetah has a strong K'taka connect

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA may not have become home for the eight cheetahs that arrived with much fanfare in Madhya Pradesh last week. But Project Cheetah has a strong Bengaluru connect. Two senior veterinary doctors from the city, who are part of the ambitious project, have played a crucial role in bringing the cheetahs to India from Namibia.

Stationed in Kuno National Park since September 17 when the cheetahs were released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday, the two experts are monitoring almost every move of the eight cheetahs and even assessing their scat and urine samples to check for any diseases, apart from who is roaming with whom and for how long.

Dr Sanath M, a former veterinarian at Bannerghatta Biological Park, moved to Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and then to Delhi Zoo, before being roped in for Project Cheetah in 2021. He is working on the risk analysis.

He is accompanied by Bipin C M, senior project associate, who is leading the WII team in Kuno.

Bipin is closely monitoring the movements and behaviour of the fastest mammals on the planet. Born in Kodagu and educated in Bengaluru, Bipin also worked with the National Centre for Biological Sciences to study human-elephant conflicts in the Western Ghats before joining WII as project biologist for reintroduction of cheetahs in 2011.

CONTINUED ON: P5

Dr Sanath M (left, behind) and Bipin CM (centre) with a box holding a cheetah, after it arrived in India

B.PAC: 57% of citizens not happy with civic amenities

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A report released by Bangalore Political Action Committee (B.PAC) on Wednesday has revealed that residents of Mahadevapura zone have the highest level of dissatisfaction over civic amenities, while the residents of Rajarajeshwari Nagar are the most satisfied.

The report titled 'Bengaluru Citizen Perception Survey', surveyed citizens' priorities with regard to civic services and their perception about quality of services in Bengaluru city.

The survey pointed out that 57 per cent of the respondents said that the overall governance of the city is not satisfactory.

The survey covered 8,405 citizens who were asked about their awareness and participation, satisfaction over level of governance and civic amenities, and BBMP elections.

CONTINUED ON: P4

MAN OF LETTERS

This scrap dealer not literate, but has 2k book library at home

Ismail Kanathur in his library at his house, at Navagrama in Balepuni village

VINCENT D'SOUZA @ Mangaluru

ONE need not be a scholar to understand the value of knowledge. An illiterate scrap dealer in Hoohakuvakallu village, about 28 km from Mangaluru city, has proved it.

Ismail Kanathur, 50, has built a small library at his house at Navagrama in Balepuni village. He seldom treated as scrap the books he got along with piles of discarded items in the last 15 years. Everyday, he isolates books which he thinks are invaluable from heaps of paper waste in his crammed shop. Many books preserved by him have found their way to libraries of educational institutions while some teachers, students and other individuals have also taken them from him. "I don't charge even a penny for it. I had no luxury of education. At least others should be benefit from it," says Ismail, who is popularly known as 'Gandhi' for his services in education.

Borrowing books and getting them for free was happening since many years. A few weeks ago, a learned person gave him the idea of setting up his own library. "This gentlemen who laid his hands on one particular book in my shop said that it costs Rs 2,000 in the market. I told him that I do not sell books and asked him to take it if it is useful for him. He refused to take it for free and forcibly thrust some currency notes in my pocket," said Ismail.

While leaving the shop, he suggested Ismail to set up a library at his house as his shop does not have adequate space for books. The scrap dealer did not think twice and with the help of Janashikshana Trust moved the books to his house in Balepuni village. The books are arranged on a wooden shelf and villagers can borrow them. He has also arranged some chairs under the shade of a scrapped dish umbrella to read books. Ismail says his library has at least 2,000 books. Krishna Muliya, member, Janashikshana Trust, described Ismail as a role model who always reaches out to people in distress. "He has saved many lives by shifting accident victims to hospital, helped poor girls get married through crowd-funding among other activities."